



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

# THE BIBLICAL WORLD

VOLUME XXV

APRIL, 1905

NUMBER 4

## Editorials

### CAN WE WORK TOGETHER?

The *Biblical World* offers no apology for printing in its pages the interesting collection of statements from living theologians which appears in the present issue under the title, "The Foundations of Religious Belief." The journal represents, indeed, biblical study rather than theology in either the broader or the narrower sense. Yet it has never stood for biblical study as opposed to theology, nor is it the conviction of the editors that biblical study can isolate itself from the other departments of theological investigation. Whether we study the Bible or theology, it is with the ultimate aim that we may find the truth, the knowledge of which is contributory to right living; and, occasionally at least, it is profitable to inquire of our fellow-seekers after religious truth concerning their work, that we may consider how our cognate tasks relate themselves one to another.

These statements which we publish make it evident that there is a considerable diversity in the point of view from which theologians of today approach their problem, and the method by which they reach their results. Doubtless this would have been still more evident if the number of contributions had been larger. The diversity of point of approach and method is conspicuous, and is of special interest to us in respect to the use of the Scriptures. We do not assume to speak for theologians in general, or for our contributors in particular—they, at least, speak clearly for themselves; but, looking at the matter from the point of view of the biblical student interested in theology, and recognizing the intimate relation between

biblical and theological study, we discern at least two quite distinct attitudes toward the Bible in its relation to theology.

#### ONE POINT OF VIEW

The first of these attitudes may be summed up in three propositions:

1. Natural theology or philosophy furnishes a basis for belief in the existence and goodness of God; in this is involved the judgment that God may be known, and the probability that he has given a revelation beyond that which is furnished by natural theology.

2. The life of Jesus, as recorded in the Scripture, is self-evidently the life of a real person, and his life and teachings accredit him as an authoritative teacher on the matters of which he spoke.

3. This authority of Jesus vouches, on the one side, for the religious teachings of the Old Testament and, on the other side, for those of the New Testament. The statements of Jesus concerning the Old Testament assure its truth, and the promise of the guidance of the divine Spirit to his followers certifies the reliability of their writings. Thus the Scriptures as a whole become for us, not indeed the sole source of truth, but the great authoritative source, in comparison with which all other sources become relatively unimportant. Consequently the content of theological doctrine will remain substantially unchanged from age to age.

#### ANOTHER POINT OF VIEW

The second general view cannot perhaps be so briefly stated, but it may be summarized as follows:

1. The theological thinking of each generation and of each thinker must start with inherited ideas, convictions, and feelings which the theologian, like every other religious man, received uncritically from parents and early teachers, and from experiences which were largely influenced by such teaching. Such inherited beliefs, however, are to be tested by the facts of experience, and new beliefs are to be derived from the interpretation of these facts. Theology is not a thing isolated from experience, a formulation of truths given in a book, and requiring only to be brought together into a system; it is intimately related to life. It follows almost as a matter of necessity that theology is neither a complete nor a stable science. Exist-

ing for the practical end of promoting good living, it must emphasize in each generation and for each people the specific needs of that generation and people.

2. The experience by which old beliefs are to be tested and revised, and from which new ones are to be derived, is ideally the religious and moral experience of the race. Nothing that comes within the range of human ethical and religious experience is really foreign to the theologian. Yet in this vast area there must be selection, and stress should be especially laid upon two fields, and still more upon a central area in each of these.

The first of these is the experience of the Hebrew race, with its peculiar genius for religion, its exceptionally rich and deep religious experience, and its long line of seers, prophets, and wise men. This experience of a race finds its culmination and center in Jesus Christ, in his life, his character, his interpretation of the world, his conception of God and man; himself, in short. This is the mountain peak of the religious experience of humanity, from which, as from no other point in human history, one may gain a vision of the eternal realities.

The second area of pre-eminent importance is the experience of living men, which is of special importance and value because it is immediately accessible and, being cast in the mold of our own mode of thought, is the more susceptible of close study and accurate interpretation. The center of this area is the religious experience of the theologian himself. To lack this is to lack the key to the understanding of the experience of other men, of Jesus, of the race. One might still catalogue other men's religious emotions, convictions, actions; but to catalogue is not to have read, still less to have understood.

3. The Bible, therefore, relates itself to theology as the record of a portion of the experience of the race—a portion, however, that is of pre-eminent importance, because of the long line of seers and prophets which it includes, and especially because to it belongs that most significant fact of the religious history of humanity, the fact of Jesus Christ. Unless there are in store for the race experiences very different from those of the last eighteen centuries, the Bible can never cease to be of importance to men in their religious lives, and so to theologians.

## MUST THESE VIEWS BE ANTAGONISTIC?

The second position differs from the first, not, as is sometimes affirmed, in discarding the Bible or in depreciating its value, but rather in the refusal to isolate the Bible from all other historical reality. The value of the Bible is found, not by first defining it as a unique literature, but by discovering, through comparison of it with other literatures, and through personal appreciation of its spiritual message, that it deserves the supreme place in our theological thinking. The first position has the advantage of definiteness, and makes the process of formulating theology the simple one of apprehending the contents of the Bible. Moreover, it can rightly claim to be the position which has been adopted and tested by centuries of Christian thought.

That all theologians would be satisfied with one or the other of these statements we do not suppose; a complete representation of the present variety of view would call for yet other formulations. But this fact only adds force and pertinence to the question which we desire to raise: Can theologians whose method of approach to this problem, and whose attitude toward Scripture, are so diverse, recognize one another as associates and fellow-workers? Can those who hold what they regard as the stricter view of the authority of Scripture tolerate and recognize as fellow-workers those who are constrained to count the Scriptures simply as among the records of religious experience, exceptionally valuable, because of the exceptionally significant nature of the experiences there recorded, but subject, like other records, to historical criticism to determine the facts, and authoritative, as other records are, for what the facts through their interpretation establish? Can those who are constrained to seek, and who believe that in the Bible they find, an authoritative literature, a body of authoritative teachings, count as friends and not as enemies those who, unconvinced by the arguments that are advanced in support of the authority of this literature, or moved by the spirit of the time and influenced by the method of investigation prevalent in other fields of study, are compelled to seek for the truth of religion as scholars seek for truth in other realms—in economics, or sociology, or psychology—viz., by the interpretation of facts ascertained by observation or historical investigation? Working upon

the same body of facts, having the same end in view, shall men who differ by a mental or moral necessity in their conceptions of the path by which the truth is to be reached, oppose one another because of the difference in method? Or shall they rejoice each in the other's work because of their unity of purpose, and their conviction that all honest study must contribute in the end to the discovery of the truth? Without for a moment blinking the fact that such difference in point of view must result in real diversity of judgment even upon questions of great significance, and that these differences call for frank statement and full discussion, we are yet constrained to plead for mutual appreciation and a spirit of co-operation. Our task is a common one; our aim is one. Amid all diversity of method and of view, let us recognize the unity of our purpose, and work side by side as friends, not as foes.

---

#### CAN A HIGHER CRITIC SAVE SOULS?

It has been a common charge brought against the historical study of the Bible that it does not "save souls." To complete the argument, attention has been triumphantly called to the fact that "evangelists" are not higher critics. That seemed to end discussion.

For our part, we are inclined to think that the test, while not the only one, is a fair one. But not just as stated. You do not expect to test the value of a chemist's work by comparing him with a cook. Yet both use chemical forces, and the relation of one to the other is not unlike that existing between the technically critical student and the worker in practical religion. Investigation, whether carried on by conservatives, semi-conservatives, or radicals, is not in itself an evangelistic proceeding. Unless we are mistaken, professors of Hebrew, even of the most anti-higher-criticism type, have not reached any particular prominence as evangelists. Criticism and evangelism are two very distinct phases of religious life. Why judge one by the other? Many of the most prominent evangelists have been pre-millennarians; must a man who is not a pre-millennarian despair of being an evangelist?

To say that higher criticism in itself is not a means of saving souls is a very different thing from saying that men under its influence cannot be evangelists or men of real religious influence. The com-